

Hamilton Field,  
Non-Commissioned Officers' Club  
(Facility No. 508)  
East of intersection of Main Entrance Road  
(Palm Avenue) and North Oakwood Drive  
Novato  
Marin County  
California

HABS No. CA-2398-AD

HABS  
CAL  
21-NOVA,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD  
Non-Commissioned Officers' Club  
(Facility No. 508)

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HABS No. CA-2398-AD

**Location:** Hamilton Army Air Field  
Novato, Marin County, California  
Non-Commissioned Officers' Club  
Facility No. 508 (East of Intersection of Main Entrance Road [Palm Drive] and North Oakwood Drive)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)  
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)  
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;  
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

**Present Owner:** U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C.

**Present Occupant:** Vacant

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Statement of Significance:**

The NCO Club and mess hall was the scene of much of the social activity on base for a great number of its residents. The dining hall facilities, card rooms, dance floor, and band stand were on the first floor, while the club operations, including offices, were housed upstairs.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) for a comprehensive Statement of Significance and individual report HABS No. CA-2398-F for a condensed general Statement of Significance.

## **PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History:**

1. **Date of Erection:** The initial construction phase on base ended in 1935, but several permanent buildings were constructed between 1935 and 1941 and reflect the architectural style of the base. The NCO Club was funded on December 9, 1938, and was completed on November 29, 1939 (Hamilton Facility Cards 1933-1971).

2. **Architect:** The NCO Club was built by the authority of the Works Progress Administration several years after the initial construction phase ended. The architect is unknown.

3. **Original Owner:** Hamilton Field is on land originally owned by private individuals and companies. In 1930, the California Packing Company sold 630 acres of land to Marin County to use to entice the Army to build on the site. An additional 161 acres were purchased from Dr. T. Peter and Julia Bodkin. These parcels were combined with other County-owned land, and in 1932 Marin County sold a 927-acre parcel of land to the Department of the Army for \$1.00 for use by the Army Air Corps as an air field. In 1947 Hamilton Air Field was transferred to the newly-formed U. S. Air Force and renamed Hamilton Air Force Base. In 1974 the U. S. Congress declared the installation excess to military needs and closed the base (Maniery et al. 1993). The NCO Club was transferred to the U. S. Navy in 1974 and is part of the Base Realignment and Closure Action.

4. **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:** The NCO Club was constructed in 1939 using Works Progress Administration funds. The builder is unknown. The construction costs totalled \$33,338.81.

5. **Original Plans and Construction:** Original plans for the NCO Club are on file in the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

6. **Alterations/Additions:** The NCO Club has been extensively remodeled. Additions to the rear and west sides have changed the configuration of the building but have not significantly altered the exterior appearance. Interior changes are more severe.

A storage room was added to the kitchen area in 1957. Major work in 1961 included rehabilitating the dining hall, kitchen, and serving line and installing new kitchen equipment and counters. The most dramatic changes occurred in 1970. In this year all existing bars and associated plumbing in the dining area were removed, along with

flooring, doors, toilet enclosures, decorative entrance, hardwood wainscoting, and bathroom fixtures. In place of these items, a new wood floor and landing was built. Other new features included concrete stairs with decorative iron rails, new asbestos shingle flooring, a suspended acoustical tile ceiling, and three new bathrooms.

**B. Historical Context:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398) and Section B in report HABS No. CA-2398-F.

During its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s, the NCO Club was a major social center. Fran Kretz, stationed here during World War II, was with the medical staff and worked in the NCO Club. She recalled the anguish of young men losing their pay checks in poker games and to the slot machines at the club. She and her husband, Ray, also related that this club was nicer than the officers' club, more elaborately decorated, with more bands, dances, and events. This was attributed to the fact that there were more NCOs than officers, increasing the revenue of the club (Kretz 1993).

**PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

**A. General Statement:**

1. Architectural Character: During the war years the population of the base increased more than twenty-fold. To meet the needs of transient soldiers, temporary and semi-permanent structures were erected everywhere, filling the spaces between the original buildings on base. A handful of the buildings constructed during this period had some architectural detailing. Completed in 1939 by the WPA, the NCO Club is a simple rectangular frame and stucco building with Doric columns in the recessed entryway. Although this building has no Spanish-style features, it blends well with the other permanent architecture in the main base area. Most other base buildings erected during this time period, however, have no distinguishing architectural features and were simply modified on the interior to meet the functional needs of clinics, offices, theaters, laundries, or day rooms.

2. Condition of fabric: The NCO Club has been allowed to deteriorate. The frame additions are falling apart, while some windows are boarded. The interior fabric is in poor condition with peeling paint and acoustical ceiling tiles falling to the floor.

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**B. Description of Exterior:**

1. Overall dimensions: The NCO Club has a two-story hall flanked by one-story wings. It is 130 feet wide by 135 feet long; originally the building was 104 feet long and 58 feet wide. The front elevation consists of a two-story hall with central recessed entry with window above flanked by a long north facing wing with five multi-pane windows on the east elevation and an enclosed loggia on the west. Extensive additions have been made to the east and rear elevations of the original building, resulting in a footprint that is roughly square.

2. Foundation: The foundation consists of bridging and girders set on precast concrete piles.

3. Walls: The exterior walls of the original section of the building are frame construction with a rough stucco finish. Exterior detailing is very simple and consists of a stucco band course at the level of the first floor and cast concrete Doric columns on either side of the recessed entryway.

4. Structural systems, framing: The building is supported by brick piers, laid in common bond pattern. The roof is wooden truss. The 1952 addition is framed with redwood.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: Primary access to the NCO Club is reached by a raised porch and recessed entryway, with concrete stairways from the east, west, and south. The stairways, stoop, and entry are covered with 12-inch square red quarry tiles. The original balustrades consist of wrought iron, with elongated S-shaped balusters. A modern concrete ramp, with one and one-half-inch pipe railing, provides handicapped access on the north side of the porch. A modern concrete stairway with metal railing is located on the east front elevation, providing access to the modern kitchen wing, and covers an older concrete stairway that accessed the original wing of the building; the steps of the original entrance are still in place. A second kitchen entry is accessed by two concrete steps and a small stoop. The original open loggia, along the west side of the building, has been enclosed with masonry construction.

6. Chimneys: A square chimney is located on the southwest corner of the two-story central mass of the building. It is brick covered with stucco and has a cornice molding. Metal chimneys and ventilators are located on the roofs of the frame additions.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways/doors: The primary entrance doors are located in the recessed entryway in the lower story of the two-story hall. They are double glass in

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aluminum frames. Double metal doors with louvers are located on the east side kitchen wing, and there is a sliding door on the east side rear elevation.

b. **Windows/shutters:** Exterior windows consist of eight-light wood casement windows beneath a four-light moveable transom. There are five sets in the east wing and two sets in the west wing north facade. Two additional sets were on the east wing east facade but were blocked with concrete when the kitchen was expanded in the 1950s. Windows on the second story consist of four-light double casements in sets of four on each side and one on the front and three sets of three-light casement windows on the rear. Windows in the modern additions have aluminum frames.

**8. Roof:**

a. **Shape/covering:** The roof on the central two-story mass is hipped, while that on the east wing is gabled. A shed roof covers the loggia in the west wing. A combination of flat and shed roofs are located over the additions. Composition shingles cover the roofs.

b. **Cornice/eaves:** Metal gutters and downspouts are located along the roofline and down the corners of the building. A band of stucco defines the cornice.

c. **Dormers, cupolas, towers:** A small, gable roof "house" with composition shingle siding and metal louvered door protrudes from the rear roof and protects a large blower.

**C. Description of Interior:**

**1. Floor Plans:**

a. **Basement:** A crawl space is located beneath the first floor.

b. **First Floor:** Original plans indicate that a large (40 foot by 70 foot) dance hall was located to the left of the main corridor. The right side had small coat rooms and a library with access to the loggias. The back of the building contained a storeroom and kitchen, bar room, and a parlor. The NCO club has expanded significantly and changed its configuration since 1952. The two-story hallway is flanked by a lobby and coat room on the west side and two lounge clubs on the east. The central north/south hallway provides access to an east/west hallway and the adjacent cashier's offices, main dining room, men's and women's latrines, and the kitchens. The kitchens, on the east side of the building, have undergone numerous alterations and additions since their original construction, resulting in a warren of small rooms, storage areas, and work spaces. The main dining room, which has a large dance floor, appears to be a later addition to the original building.

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The two front lounge clubs both have wet bars on the rear, or south, walls, and small bandstands and dance floors. They were remodeled and redecorated over the ensuing years since their original construction. An extensive loggia, along the west side of the building, has been enclosed with masonry construction.

c. **Second Floor:** The second floor consists of an apartment, presumably for the manager of the NCO facility. It is accessed via an enclosed wooden stairway from the lower story hallway, and consists of a hallway, front living room (converted to a laundry room and the ceiling lowered), bedroom, bath, and small office. Originally the living room was a designated office and the current office was used for storage.

2. **Stairways:** An enclosed wooden stairway provides access to the second story apartment. The balustrade is oak, with chamfered square posts with round newels, square balusters, and carved handrail. All but one of the newels has been removed.

3. **Flooring:** Subflooring in the entire building is wood, covered with generations of asphalt tile, plywood, carpet, and wood in the hallways, lounges and dining rooms. The asphalt tile varies from green, to brown, to red, to black. Flooring in the kitchen, coolers, and boiler room is concrete. Dance floors are oak. Flooring in the men's bath is two-inch square and one- by two-inch ceramic tile. Subflooring on the second story is wood, covered with eight-inch square green asphalt tile.

4. **Wall/ceiling finish:** Original wall and ceiling finishes on the first floor are gypsum board and plaster board. The ceilings on the first floor have been lowered and covered with two layers of acoustical tile. The wall and ceiling finishes on the second story apartment are gypsum board, with reeded molding, crown molding, chair rail, and wooden baseboard in the hallway. Wall coverings in the lounges, dining room, and rear hallway consist of layers of gypsum board, plaster board, and composition wood paneling. Walls in the kitchen area are covered with six-inch square red quarry tile. The men's latrine walls are clad in the original cream ceramic tile; the women's latrine in modern pink ceramic tile.

5. **Openings:**

a. **Doorways/doors:** Wooden archways are located between the lobby and rear hallway and from one of the lounges. Doors on the second floor are solid-core wood with three recessed panels. There are two types of doors in the kitchen wing: double quilted stainless steel, and solid-core wood with louvers and metal push plates. Replacement doors on the first floor are hollow core wood.

b. **Windows:** Windows in the cashier's offices are large one-light glass set in wooden frames, providing light and a view to the rear hallway.

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6. **Decorative features/trim:** The doorways in the manager's office area have reeded molding, which is also present around the bandstand. The manager's office, lobby, and lower hallway have chair railing. Decorative trim in the second story apartment consists of reeded molding, chair rail, and crown molding in the hallway. Built-in furnishings in the lounges include a tufted vinyl bar, mirrors, canvas canopy over built-in booths, decorative paneling, bandstands, and oak dance floors. None appear to be original to the building.

7. **Hardware:** Doors on the first floor replacement doors are standard locksets with circular knobs. Locksets on the second story are standard with circular knobs; hinges are half mortised and are original.

8. **Mechanical equipment:**

a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** Most of the original equipment has been replaced. The boiler room has a modern "Day & Night Duel Hot Water" heater next to an original 250-gallon tank. A gas-fired "York" furnace is off of the kitchen. Duct work is present between the original ceiling and the added suspended ceiling. The dining hall contains a large, stand-up air conditioner that is exhausted into a brick chimney. It is a "Frigidare" made by a division of General Motors. The unit has a decorative sheet metal grille in front and plain sheet metal sides. The addition on the west side is heated with wall-mounted space heaters and wall vents.

b. **Kitchen Appliances:** In 1961 the kitchen equipment included the following: water cooler, coffee urn, milk dispenser, cash register, refrigerated pie and cake display unit, food warmers, hot plate, grill, fryers, ventilator hood, ice cream cabinet, multi-mixer, fountain, pizza oven, dishwasher, garbage disposal, ranges, broilers, and a steam table. Most of this equipment has been removed.

The kitchen appliances all appear to be replacements and include a "Toledo" dishwasher (model TKM 64), and a gas "South Bend" range with three fired brick-lined ovens, two "Magic Ray" boilers, and eight burners. The second room in the kitchen contains a "Wells" electric unit with two closed grills, two open grills, two fryers, and six bread warmers. The two cold storage units contain "Kremer" heat transfer equipment.

c. **Ventilation:** Ventilation consists of three vents in the basement story, louvers in the gable ends of the roof, and metal roof ventilators. Large exhaust fans are located in the kitchen. The basement crawl space is vented by rectangular louvers.



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d. **Lighting:** The upstairs apartment has "schoolhouse" fixtures with metal canopies and milk glass globes. These are original to the building. Porcelain-canopied pull-chain lights with a single exposed bulb are present in the bathroom and small rooms.

The downstairs telephone room, coat room, and boiler room contain the porcelain light fixtures. The majority of the building was lit by two-tube or four-tube fluorescent ceiling-mounted and suspended replacement lights. Lights in the coolers are connected to exposed conduit and have porcelain sockets with a metal canopy and are original. The exterior has several three-prong, wall-mounted light fixtures that once contained flood lights.

e. **Plumbing:** The primary bathrooms and plumbing were renovated in 1970. At that time eight "Crane Santon" flush-valve toilets and eight "cultured marble" molded sinks were installed in the women's room. The men's room contains two "Standard" and "Standard Washal" flush-valve urinals, "Standard" wall-mounted sinks, and a "Standard Madera" flush-valve toilet.

A small bathroom off the bar contains one original flush-valve "American Standard" urinal. The upstairs apartment plumbing and fixtures are original and include a cast iron sink, "Standard" toilet, and tile-lined shower with metal faucets.

9. **Original Furnishings:** The wood bar top appears original. The built-in cashier's cage, made of wood with iron bars, is an addition.

**D. Site:**

1. **General site orientation:** The NCO Club is located on a flat site west of the Base Theater (Building 507) against a sloping hillside studded with oak trees. Its primary facade faces north, towards a large asphalt parking lot and the Main Entrance Road, in the original Spanish Colonial Revival district of Hamilton Army Air Field.

2. **Historic landscape design:** Captain Nurse's overall plan for base design included thoughtful use of rock walls, terracing, and plantings to create a visual effect that was continued, in a more limited fashion, during World War II. Rock terracing throughout the original base served to simultaneously separate individual residences while visually uniting various sections of the base into an overall city-like plan. They were built as part of the final phase of original post construction in 1935 (Hamilton Official Photographs 1934-1935). Foundation and accent plantings, tree-lined streets, and retention of natural oak groves and rolling hills complement the rock work.

The majority of buildings in the administration area have some landscaping, particularly around the NCO barracks. Street trees, such as Modesto esh, camphor, and

various palms, are present throughout this area. Building corner and doorways are delimited by a number of conifers, the most prominent being sawara false cypress and Italian cypress. Accent trees include coast redwood and some red ironbark, which were incorporated into divider triangles and sometimes near entrances. California and Mexican fan palms and golden bamboo were prominent framers of entrances, as was the New Zealand dracaena. Foundation plantings are quite diverse and include mock orange, flowering quince, Portugal laurel, and Manukka tea tree. Japanese privet, Hollywood juniper, and heavenly bamboo appear to have been added subsequent to the late 1930s and were not part of the original landscape design on base.

Building 508 is accessed from the parking lot by a concrete walkway bordered with two rows of oleanders. A manicured lawn surrounds the building on the north and west sides, studded with cedar and eucalyptus trees, hydrangea, cottoneaster, pyracantha, and oleander shrubbery. Fan palms are located in the front lawn.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

#### **A. Architectural Drawings:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). The NCO plans are filed at the National Archives, Pacific Division, San Bruno, CA. and the Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

#### **B. Historic Maps and Views:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

#### **C. Interviews:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Ray and Fran Kretz were interviewed on December 8, 1993 at their home in Citrus Heights, California.

#### **D. Bibliography:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

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Fine, Jesse, and Lenore Remington

1972 *Army Corps of Engineers: Construction in the U.S.* U.S. Army and World War II,  
Office of Military History.

Hamilton Facility Cards

1933-1971 Maintenance Cards for Base Facilities. On file, Hamilton Army Air Field  
Installation Office, Novato, and Hamilton Room, Novato History Museum, Novato.

Maniery, Mary L., Leslie R. Fryman, and Fred Hrusa

1993 *National Register of Historic Places Evaluation, Hamilton Army Air Field Historic  
District, Marin County, California.* Submitted to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers,  
Sacramento District.

Thomason and Associates

1993 *Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.* Cultural Resource Survey, Final  
Report. Nashville, Tennessee. On file, State Office of Historic Preservation, Austin,  
Texas.

**E. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:**

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

**F. Supplemental Material:**

Copies of representative floor plans of Facility No. 508, dated in the 1930s and prepared  
by the Quartermaster's General Office are attached to this form. The line drawn sketches  
were drafted on site in 1994 by Keith Syda, scanned into a computer and drawn by  
Christopher MacDonald in 1995, and corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all  
PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department  
of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services  
Administration. The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers.  
The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the  
California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on  
properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible  
for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP

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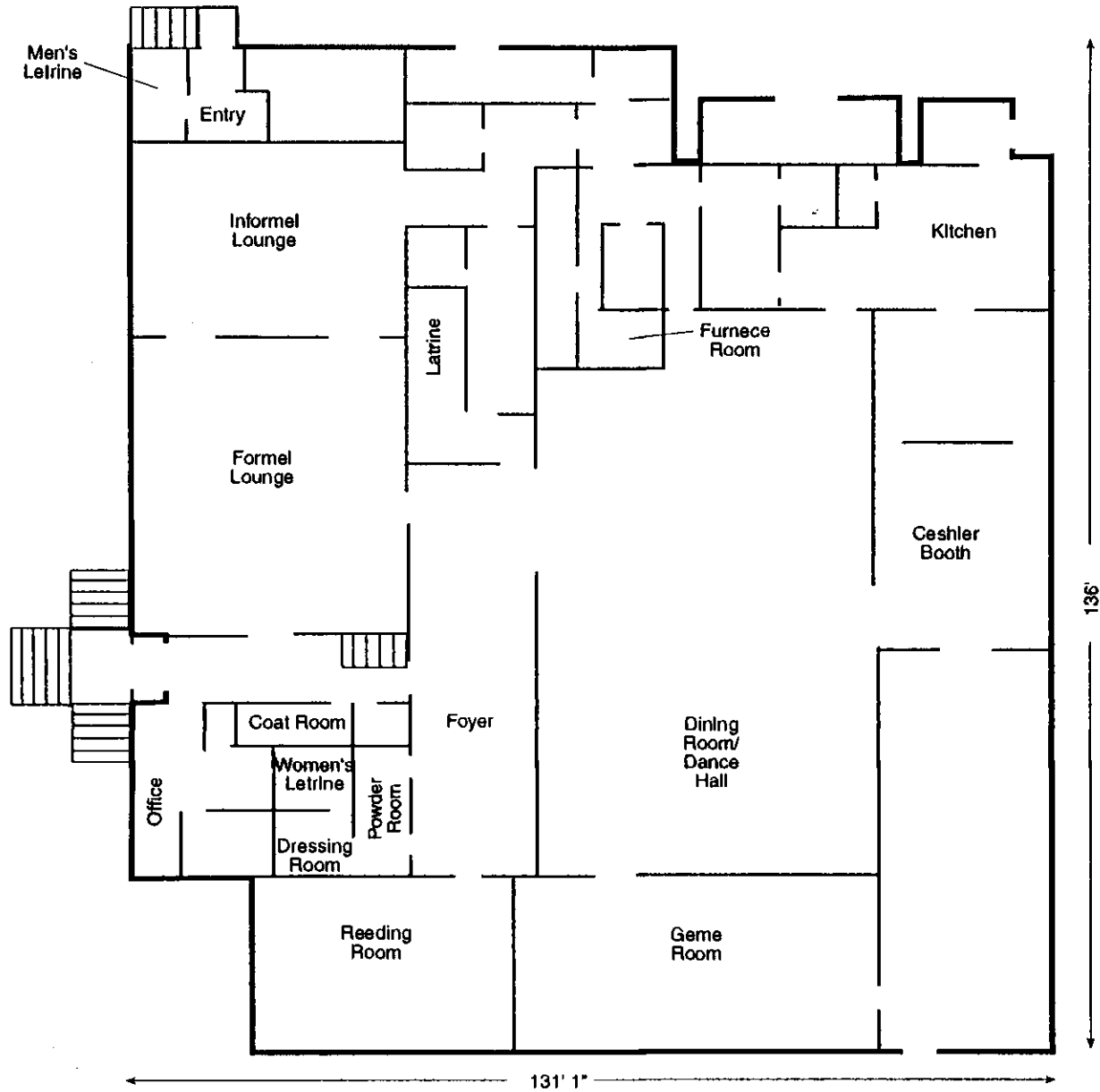
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and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

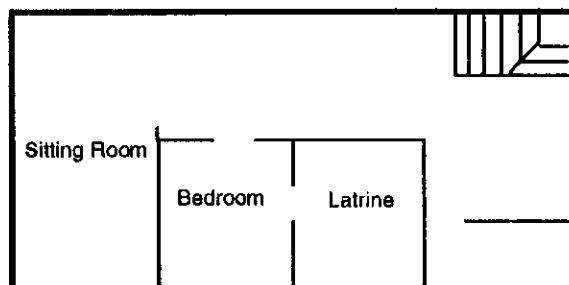
The title page, Part I, and Part III were prepared by Mary L. Maniery, Historian, PAR Environmental Services, Sacramento. Architectural descriptions in Part II were compiled by Judith Marvin, Historian/Architectural Historian, Foothill Resources, Murphys, California. Descriptions were checked against photographs and plans by Mary L. Maniery and were embellished and corrected, as necessary. Information on historic landscape design was extracted by Mary L. Maniery from a report prepared by Dr. Fred Hrusa, Botanist, PAR Environmental Services. Photography was prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

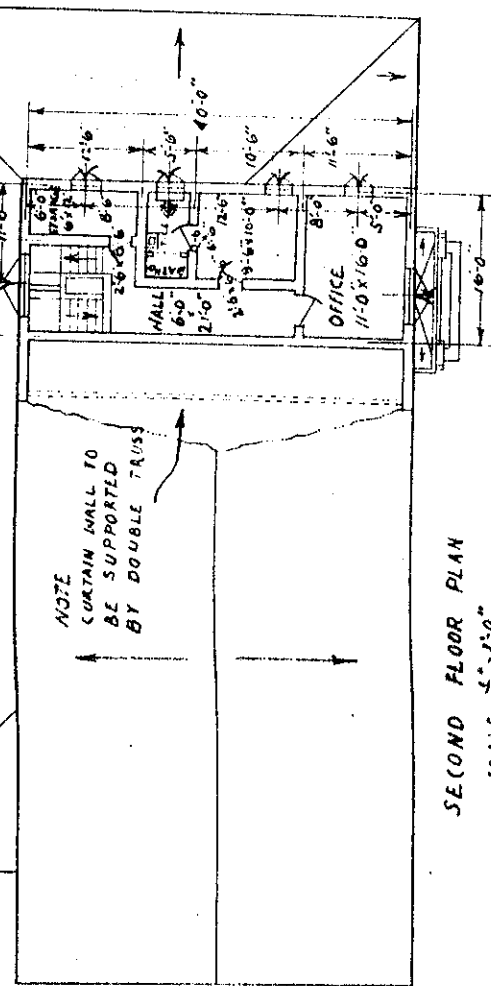
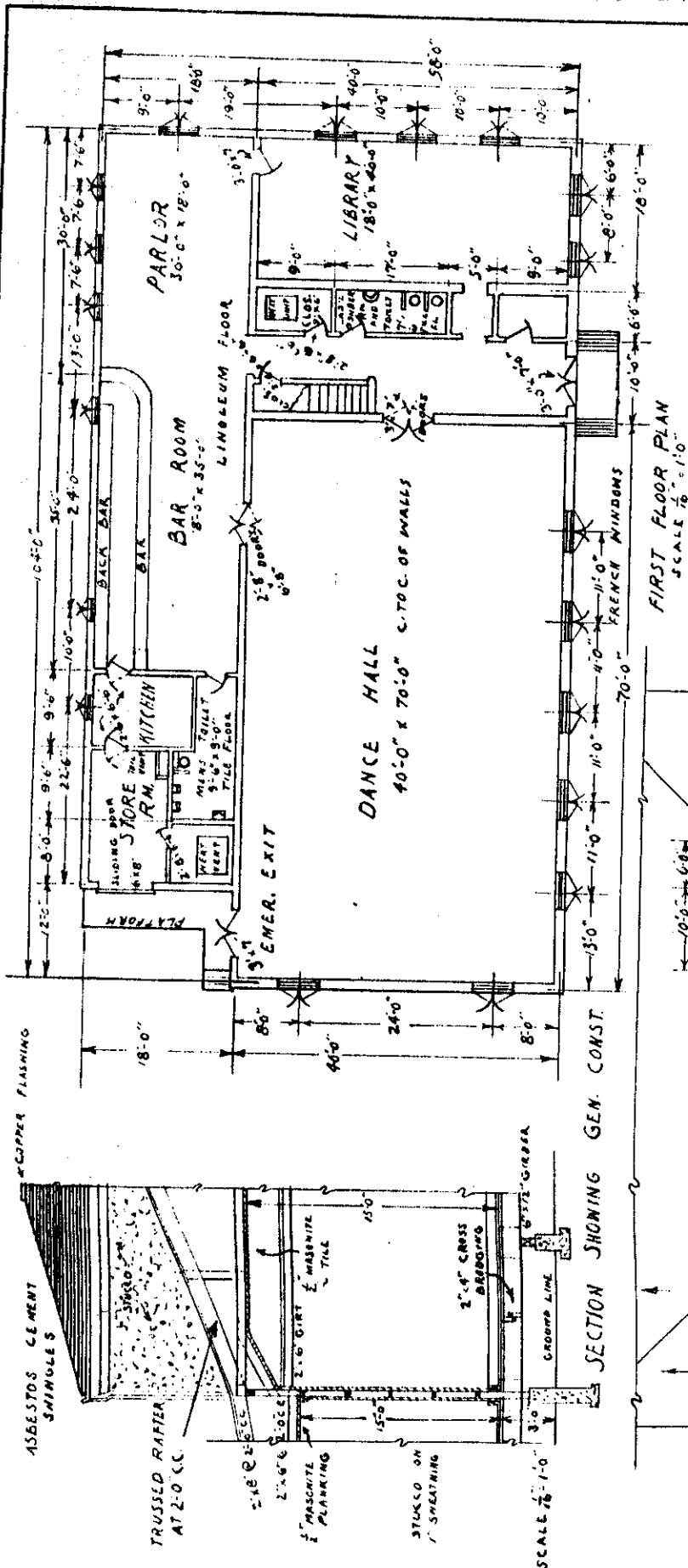


FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR





WAR DEPARTMENT	
OFFICE QUARTERMASTER	
HAMILTON FIELD CAMP	
NON-COM OFFICERS CLUB	
DRAWN BY [Signature]	
CHECKED BY [Signature]	
DATE 9-14-41	